



Maryland Attorney General's **COVID-19 Access to Justice Task Force**

MINUTES

Housing Security Committee

August 19, 2020

- Call to Order & Open Meetings Act discussion
- Selection of liaison to Pro Bono Committee
 - Amy Hennen & Greg Countess to communicate with members
 - Identifying what our pro bono resources/needs will be
 - Debt collection actions surrounding HOA/COA past dues
 - Help negotiating rent
 - Current issues:
 - Increase in tenant holdover cases
 - Issues with tenant knowledge about evictions
 - Town Hall meetings to address
- Selection of liaison to Public Awareness Committee
 - Liaison: Carol Ott
 - Goals
 - Sending out an easy-to-follow one-pager informational sheet
 - Collaborate with Public Awareness committee
 - Smaller group to collect this information/content for one-pager
 - Greg Countess
 - Jessica Quincosa
 - Gregory Riddick
 - Resources
 - Legal aid (via Greg Countess) has guide for legal defenses to landlord/tenant cases
 - Adria Crutchfield to provide COVID info by county:
<https://brhp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/BRHP-Resource-Guide-07312020.pdf>
 - Del. Shaneka Henson to follow up with MD 211
- Upcoming Town Hall Meetings via YouTube

- Need people to host/lead discussion and answer questions
 - Greg Countess
- Main message: go to court
 - Contradicts with health hazards - must address both issues
- Provide guidance through the court process
- Safety Protocols in District Court
 - Inconsistent implementation of health and safety protocols and no uniform enforcement of protocols
 - Masks not worn
 - Occupancy limitations not being obeyed (ex- elevator limits)
 - Courts scheduling over the 20 case limit
 - Courthouse staff testing positive for COVID
 - Issues with the ability to communicate privately with clients/witnesses exacerbated
 - Communal resources being used- tables, pens
 - Issues with taking temperatures- no available bailiffs; temps high due to the heat; whether thermometers are accurate
 - Scheduling based on possible assumption that litigants will not appear
 - Who can bring attention to these issues?
 - AG?
 - Make recommendation - some type of accountability measure to be put in place (ideas- public can report complaints; AG spot-checking; routine reporting)
 - Especially with higher case volumes coming in September
- Calls for Special Session
 - Request for AG Opinion in the process
- Long-term legislation recommendations
 - Outline needed by Sept. 17
 - Break down eviction process, perform research & decide what recommendations have appeal
 - Create resource to obtain feedback from Committee about recommendations
- Upcoming meeting: 09/02/2020 1:00PM